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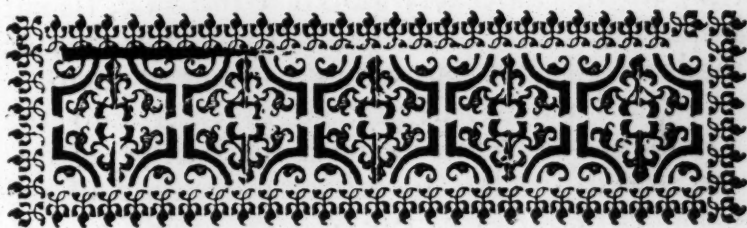
R
F R O M A
G E N T L E M A N in *Stirling*, to
his Friend at *Edinburgh*;

C O N T A I N I N G
G E N U I N E C O P I E S of the several
L E T T E R S that pass'd between
the Presbyteries of *Stirling* and *Dun-*
blane and the Associate Brethren, at
the Meeting of their Presbytery in
Stirling, 13th *December* 1738.



E D I N B U R G H,
Printed and sold by the Booksellers in Town and
Country. M D C C X X X I X.





S O M E
O B S E R V A T I O N S
O N A

LETTER from a Gentleman at
Stirling, to his Friend at *Edin-*
burgh, &c.

S I R,



Have just now perus'd a Half-sheet, entitled, *A Letter from a Gentleman in Stirling, &c.*

Had these four Letters been published naked, *i. e.* without a Preface longer, and a Postscript little shorter than

any of them, I believe the Bulk of Mankind, at least, that understand *English*, should have been at no Loss to have found out the true Meaning of

them. But when, by such a Preface and Postscript, they are thus miserably gloss'd to one Side, 'tis not impossible but some of the most judicious may be inadvertently led into wrong Notions of them.

I shall not at all pretend to enter into the Merits of the Cause betwixt the Parties above-mentioned, far less to justify every Step of the Conduct of the Associate Presbytery, either conjunctly or severally, for six or seven Years by-gone; but I think 'tis pretty notour to the whole World, that the Church of *Scotland* has done them ample Justice, and that most justly in the Business whereon their Secession was made, *viz.* the Act 32, having representatively, in the Assembly 34, rescinded that Act, tho' in a Manner not satisfactory to these Brethren. I shall only offer some *Observations* on the Remarks, and the Letters jointly, as they occur to my Reflection.

“ They desired a friendly Conversation with
 “ them, in order to reclaim and reduce them
 “ to their Duty. *Page 3.* ——— Were earnest-
 “ ly desirous to have a friendly Conference,
 “ ——— in order to reclaim and reduce you to
 “ your Duty.” *Page 4.*

Two very masterly Strokes truly !

——— *Risum teneatis ?*

I declare this brings to my Mind the Phrases I remember to have heard from our School-master, tho' in another Language, when we were any Way obstreperous, about ten or twelve Years of Age. I shall leave this with only a single Question, Is there nothing here like what they call *petitio principii* ? But to proceed,

“ ——— No

“———No Answer was returned to either”
 “ which made such Impression———that, as I
 “ am informed, (*N. B.*) they pressed them hard
 “ to go into the said Conference, with Certifi-
 “ cation, that, if they did not, they would be
 “ obliged to desert a Set of Men, who either
 “ could not, or would not do any Thing for
 “ their own Vindication; which obliged Mr.
 “ *Ebenezer Erskine* to give them some Ground
 “ to hope, that, at the next Meeting of their
 “ Associate Presbytery, they would challenge
 “ the said Presbytery to a Conference on that
 “ Subject.” *Page 3.*

Here are some pretty strong Assertions, but where are the Vouchers? *Ans.* Just at Hand; *my anonymous Word!* Indeed I can’t help thinking, that your *Word*, in the present Circumstances, is just as good as *No-bodies*.

Again, “The Act of last Assembly has declared us *Schismatics*, and condemned the whole of our Conduct. *Page 5.*”

“———The last Assembly———have declared
 “ *Schismatics*, and condemned the whole of
 “ our Conduct as a dangerous *Schism*. *P. 7.*”

The first Letter, which you observe in the Preface, takes it for granted, that the Associate Presbytery are *out of their Duty*, and the Assembly’s Act *stigmatizes* them as *Schismatics*: Suppose then the Associates agree to a Conference on these Terms, is the Sun-light at Noon-Day clearer, than this that should have been palpably to have given up and homologate what the other Party so *magisterially* took for granted?

Nay,

Nay, but——“ But to declare, that we do
 “ it not (*i. e.* that we are not willing to confer
 “ with you) in Pursuance of the good Design
 “ proposed by the last Assembly, is what we can-
 “ not do, in a Consistency with Truth.” *Ex*
ungue leonem. Page 6.

I saw a Pamphlet, some Years ago, called,
The Politick Disputant; or, Choice Instructions
for quashing a stubborn Adversary. Amongst
 other rare *Topicks* for a *Politick Disputant*,
 there is, I remember, one, I think, something like
 this, *Be sure, now and then, to give your Adver-*
sary a Glance of AUTHORITY; but this with
Discretion, lest you provoke him too much.

’Tis undeniable, that they have most religi-
 ously observed the first Part of the Instruction;
 but some People are so malicious, or silly, as
 to think they have kept no tolerable *Decorum*
 as to the last.

Was the Presbytery of *Stirling* and *Dun-*
blane ignorant, that the Associates had no Re-
 gard to the *last Assembly*, or even any *Assem-*
bly of the Church now established? Were they
 not *morally*, if not *absolutely* certain, that they
 would comply with Nothing that had the least
 Reference to the *last Assembly*? ’Tis impossible
 they can refuse it. Suppose the *last Assembly*
 proposed a good Design, as, without Question,
 they did, was it not possible for these Presby-
 teries to pursue that good Design, without still
 quoting the *last Assembly*?

’Tis humbly submitted, whether the Presby-
 teries had not proposed the good Design fully
 as well as they have done, (unless their real
 Design

Design was to shift a Conference, at the same Time that they would seem to demand one, as some are so malicious as to think it was) had they exchanged the two following Sentences or Clauses, and instead of, [*But to declare, that we do it not in Pursuance of the good Design proposed by the last Assembly, is what we cannot do in a Consistency with Truth*] had written, [*But to offer you what Light we can, to prevail with you to return to us; or to hear what you have to offer us, in order to perswade us to join you*] or something like this. No, there must be Nothing of this; *Authorities, Assemblies* must be quoted. I heartily wish, if it were but for the Sake of some particular Persons that could be named, *That the Assembly may never vote over the Mass-book, nor the Alcoran.*

“To which, about an Hour after their Meeting, they gave the following Return.” P. 6.

It were well worth While to know at what Hour of the Day this was; it would have been but just *Ingenuity* to have told us, considering the Pointedness of Mr. *Erskine's* Letter just before, *To-morrow at Ten of the Clock Forenoon.* 'Tis not in my Power to be so *impartial*, but that, altho I had not these Words in the *Postscript* of Mr. *Erskine's* Letter, [*We waited for you at the Place and Hour condescended upon in our last, and more than two Hours since, &c.*] I say, altho' I had not this to go upon, I durst venture a small Wager, it was some Hours after. I hope you'll do yourself and Mr.

Erskine

Erskine the Justice, to tell your Friend at *E-dinburgh* in your next.

I have heard it said, since the writing of these Letters, and shall produce my Authors, if desired, that the Presbyteries had been censurable by the next Assembly, nay, must have unchurched themselves as much as the Associates are, if they had declared, that their Meeting or Conference should be without the least Regard to the last Assembly, or their Act.

Is it really true then, that no Brother in their Neighbourhood could, but on these Terms, converse with them on their Separation; nor can, till the next Assembly? I can't think it. If then *one* Brother, why not two? Why may not *twenty* confer with them on that Subject, *without the least Regard to the Assembly, or their Act?* Or did the Assembly limit a Time, betwixt it and which the neighbouring Brethren were to converse with them, in Consequence of their Act? And was *December* 14th 1738. that precise Time? I dare say, this will scarcely be alledged; and if so, what, in the Name of Wonder and Astonishment, hindered the Presbyteries to confer with the Associates upon any lawful Terms on that 14th of *December*, especially when they had so fair an Opportunity, *at my House To-morrow at Ten of the Clock Forenoon?* I think this is so *plain Scots*, that no Child of five Years old can be at the least Lofs about it. Had they not near five long Months to the next Assembly? Might they not, in that Interval, have conversed with them forty Times as private Brethren, and fifty Times as Delegates,

gates, or call them what you will, from the Assembly ?

But hold, here comes the wonderful Reason in your Account! *Stirling, 13th December 1748.* To-morrow, ten Years hence! Surprising! An unfurmountable Difficulty! How unlucky it was, that it is not *Stockholm* instead of *Stirling*, that there might have been a Pretext of want of Opportunity of explaining ?

But here, by the By, I must ask you, who pretend to give *Genuine Copies of Things*, Where was either your Wit or your Ingenuity? Your Wit in not taking notice, that Mr. *Erskine's* second Letter had no Date, which possibly might have rectify'd that of the first? or your Ingenuity, in not copying it, if there was any, for Fear it should have explained the former? You must not say your *about an Hour after*, and your *about two Hours after*, and so forth, will solve the Matter, in Regard the Letter might be written at *Stirling* that Day, and yet dated, *Jerusalem, Ad Kalendas Græcas.*

Mr. *Erskine's* second Letter either had a Date, or, it had none. If it had, it must have been either 38. or the old 48, or some other. If 38. then it clearly explained the Mistake of the former; and in that Case, *your Ingenuity Loups.* If none, or 48. or any other, then certainly your Wit.

But to proceed, " The Ministers of the two " Presbyteries shewed the outmost Condescendence." Page 8.

This is a Fact which must be left to every ones Belief, as it will best believe for him; only 'tis

hoped, every one will gather his Belief from the Letters themselves, and not from the Commentary. I will not say this is *Protestatio contraria facto*; but I don't remember to have seen any Thing more like it.

Again, with a little Transposition, not at all marring their Sense, "They desired sincerely to prevent the Commencement of any Process against Mr. *Ebenezer Erskine* and his Brethren, and to promote their real Interest."

Ibid.

—*Sic notus Ulysses? Hum, hm, hm!*
Timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes!

"And when the whole is duly considered, it will plainly appear, that they only wanted a Pretence to decline any Conference on that Subject."

Most certainly: Because they told them they would wait on them *To-morrow at ten of the clock in the Forenoon, at Mr. Erskine's House*, provided they came without Authority at their A———And in another Place, that they had waited for them at the Place and Hour formerly condescended on, and *more than two Hours after*, and that they (would wait some, tho' they) *could not wait much longer, and so forth, and so forth.*

"However, it gave me the outmost Pleasure, to see all the Brethren of the two Presbyteries there present, unite so heartily in this good Cause! *Conclus.*

No Doubt they would crow very loudly. This brings to my Mind a Custom, which, I have heard

heard, is common at the Coronation of some Kings, I believe those of *Britain*: They say, before the Solemnity, it is ordinary for a Squire to appear on Horse-back, richly caparisoned and well armed, and to challenge any Man to come and dispute with him the Prince's Title to the Crown. He is pretty sure no Body will be at the Pains to take him up. Now, you know a Disputant of any Kind is equally safe, whether his Adversary dares not, or will not take up the Cudgels. I don't say directly, that either Party wanted a Pretence to decline the Conference; but I think it is pretty plain, one of them took the most effectual Method to shift it, that ever was invented, and, at the same Time, put on Airs of Inclination thereto; while the *other* was very particular as to Time and Place, &c. and that upon Terms, which some are so silly as to think, most reasonable.

I have nothing further to add, tho' a great deal more might be said, but that all the Blunders in Language or Logick, all Faults and Escapes of every Kind, in these my cursory Observations, are chargeable on my self alone: Neither Mr. *Erskine*, nor any of his Adherents, having had the least Hand in them, and consequently not being any Way accountable for the Defects of them; neither am I any Way attached to that Presbytery. I shall borrow only one other Word for my Apology, from my Friend, the Author of the *Politick Disputant*, before-mentioned,

Homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto.

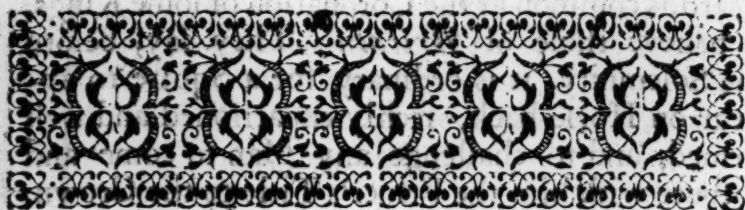
A—a, Dec. 30th

I am, &c.

1738.

B 2

Follows



Follows the LETTERS passed betwixt
the Presbyteries of *Stirling* and *Dun-*
blane, and the Associate Presbytery.

R. D. B.

I And several of our Brethren, in the
Neighbourhood, being here met, upon some
necessary Business, came to understand, that you,
and several of your Brethren, with whom
you join in full Communion, are in this Place ;
and considering that tho' the Moderator of the
Synod of Perth and Stirling wrote you a Letter,
dated the 12th of October last ; as also a Mem-
ber of the Presbytery of Stirling wrote you a-
nother about the same Time, signifying, that
the Brethren in their Bounds, were earnestly
desirous to have a friendly Conference with
you and your Brethren, in order to reclaim
and reduce you to your Duty, and the Com-
munion of this Church, and desiring you to
appoint Time and Place of the said Confe-
rence, and return an answer to them betwixt
and the Twenty sixth of the said Month ;
which if you did not, they would look upon it,
as your declining any such Conference ; yet you
were pleas'd to return no Answer thereto. They
judged

judged it their Duty, by this, to shew you that they are most willing, that you should hold the said Conference with them, and appoint Time and Place for it, and that they expect your Answer this Night; which if you do not, they must reckon it a Declining any such Conference. This, in their Name, is humbly signified to you, by,

R. D. B.

Stirling 13th
Dec. 1738.

Your affectionate Brother,
and humble Servant,

JOHN WARDEN.

Directed, To the Reverend Mr. Ebenezer Erskine Minister of the Gospel at Stirling; or to Messieurs William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, or James Fisher, Ministers for present at Stirling.

R. D. B.

I received yours, desiring a Conference with me and some of my Brethren, which I communicated to them; and they, having considered the same, were of Opinion, that, if you were satisfied to converse with us, in a friendly Way, for Information, and not in Consequence of the Act of the last Assembly, which has declared us Schismaticks, and condemned the whole of our Conduct; nor as Members of a Committee of Synod, appointed in Obedience to that Act; Then, and in that Case, we are satisfied to essay, as the LORD shall enable us,

us, to support and defend the Testimony, which the Associate Presbytery has emitted for the received Principles of the Church of Scotland. And if you think fit to converse with us in the above Terms, we are willing to wait of you at my House To-morrow at Ten of the Clock Forenoon. I am,

R. D. B.

Stirling, 13th.
Dec. 1748.

Your very humble
Servant,

EBENEZER ERSKINE

*Directed, To the Reverend Mr. John War-
den, Minister of the Gospel at Gargunnoch,
for present at Stirling.*

R. and D. B.

*Tours I had this Morning, which I commu-
nicated to my Brethren, who are yet in Town,
who have laid their Command on me, to shew
you, that they are willing, in a friendly Way,
to converse you on your Separation from the
Communion of this Church; to essay to recon-
cile you thereto; and neither to act in a judi-
cative Capacity, nor as a Committee of any Ju-
dicatory appointed for that End: But to de-
clare, that we do it not in Pursuance of the
good Design, proposed by the last Assembly, is
what we cannot do in a Consistency with Truth;
and being you mention, that in that Conference,
you are only to essay to support and defend the
Testimony emitted by you, I am desired to shew
you, that the Design of this Meeting proposed,*
is

is not to hear what you can say on that Head, save only in so far as you advance any Thing therein-contained as a Ground for your present Separation. And if you are willing to admit of a Conference in this Shape, we are satisfied to wait of you, as soon as you please, and expect your immediate Answer, being we have attended so long already, waiting your Answer to my last. I am,

R. D. B.

*Stirling, 14th
Dec. 1738.*

Your affectionate Brother,
and humble Servant,

JOHN WARDEN.

*Directed, To the Reverend Mr. Ebenezer
Erskine, Minister of the Gospel at Stirling.*

R. D. B.

In Answer to your's, of this Day's Date, wherein you inform me, that you cannot, in a Consistence with Truth, declare, that your Conference with us is not in Pursuance of the good Design proposed by the last Assembly; it is our Opinion, That, whereas the last Assembly, by their Act anent us, have declared us Schismatics, and condemned the whole of our Conduct, as a dangerous Schism; as also, they have appointed, that, in case such Conferences as you propose, take not the Effect of what the said Act of Assembly calls, A Reclaiming and Reducing us to our Duty, that then we shall be process'd. As this appears to us to be a very bad Design, so we judge, that we cannot, in a
Con-

Consistency with Truth, and the Testimony which we look upon as our Duty, through Grace, to hold, go in to any such Conferences, as import a countenancing the foresaid Design.

When you say, that in my last we are only to essay to support and defend the Testimony emitted by us; as my Brethren and I, in my last, did not design to confine the Conversation to what is contained in the Testimony alone, so we are not only willing to converse with you upon what is contained in our foresaid Testimony, but also upon the whole of our Conduct, providing the Conversation be in the Terms proposed in our yesternight's Letter. I am,

R. D. B.

*Stirling, 14th
Dec. 1738.*

Your affectionate Brother,
and humble Servant,

EBENEZER ERSKINE.

P. S. We waited for you at the Place and Hour condescended upon in our last, and more than two Hours since, and the Hour appointed for the publick Meeting of Presbytery being now past, you cannot expect that we can wait much longer upon you, at least, till our Meeting of Presbytery be over.

Directed, To the Reverend Mr. John Warden Minister of the Gospel at Gargunnoch, for present at Stirling.

E R R A T A.

PAge 3. before *S I R*, read, *Address'd to the*
AUTHOR.

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